



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Helene Nelson, Secretary

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For Immediate Release

Stephanie Marquis, Communications Director, (608) 266-1683

It's Better to Know

June 27th is National HIV Testing Day

MADISON – As part of National HIV Testing Day, state health officials are encouraging people who are at risk for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) to be tested for the virus. The first case of HIV infection in the country was reported 25 years ago and HIV disease continues to be a serious public health issue.

“Having an HIV test is the only way to know if you are infected with HIV – the virus that causes AIDS,” said Dr. Sheri Johnson, State Health Officer. “Early medical care can delay the complications of HIV disease. Also, studies show that individuals who know they are infected take steps to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others.”

Approximately 8,000 Wisconsin residents are living with HIV infection and approximately 2,000 of these residents may be unaware they are infected. Up to two-thirds of new HIV infections occur as a result of persons not knowing they are HIV positive and unintentionally passing HIV to someone else.

Persons who may be at risk for HIV infection and can benefit from HIV testing are those who:

- had unprotected sex with someone with HIV infection;
- had unprotected sex with men who have sex with men;
- injected drugs or shared injection equipment (such as needles, syringes, cotton, water) with others;
- have been diagnosed with or treated for hepatitis B or C, tuberculosis (TB), or a sexually transmitted disease (STD) like syphilis or gonorrhea;
- exchanged sex for drugs or money;
- received a blood transfusion or clotting factor between 1978 and 1985; or
- had unprotected sex, especially with anyone who is part of the risk groups listed above.

HIV testing is particularly important for people of color since HIV infection disproportionately affects African Americans and Hispanic/Latinos. Minority populations in Wisconsin comprise approximately 10 percent of the state's population, yet they represent more than half of the reported HIV cases in the state.

Current medications and treatments can prolong and increase the quality of life of persons living with HIV. Because HIV medications can also lower the risk of a pregnant woman with HIV infection passing HIV to her fetus or newborn, health care providers recommend strongly that all pregnant women receive HIV testing early in pregnancy and again later in pregnancy if they continue to have HIV risks.

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Persons who have questions about HIV testing are encouraged to talk with their health care provider, local health department, or call 1-800-334-2437 to locate HIV testing resources in Wisconsin.

For more information about HIV/AIDS in Wisconsin, visit <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aids-hiv/index.htm>

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